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A New Focus on State Services for Crime Victims
Maryland revamps its State Board of Victim Services; Begins Victims' Needs Assessment Survey
And Prepares to Allocate Increased Federal Grant Funds

Baltimore, MD - The Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention today announced a new direction for state efforts to elevate Maryland's crime victims within the state criminal justice system through these changes:

- the appointment of Steven J. Kelly as the new Chair of the Maryland State Board of Victim Services (MSBVS);
- the creation of a dedicated Victim Services Unit, which will include the appointment of Kim Herndon to lead the Victim Services Unit. Ms. Herndon is Director of Victim Services and the State Victim Services Coordinator and works closely with the MSBVS. The Victim Services Unit will incorporate the Governor's Family Violence Council, which will continue to provide the Governor with timely and accurate information on family violence, and recommend strategies to reduce and eliminate abusive behaviors;
- a statewide needs assessment to learn how GOCCP should target grant funding for victim services in order to address our state's most pressing needs.

The new Chair of the MSBVS, Steven J. Kelly, is an experienced attorney who is a national leader in the field of defending crime victims' rights in criminal and civil proceedings. He currently serves as a Commissioner on the Maryland Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and is a nationally recognized authority on restitution and victim compensation. Kelly helped to lobby the United States Congress to pass what eventually became known as the Crime Victims Rights Act of 2006.

"Maryland is well positioned to serve as a national leader in affording victims meaningful rights," said Kelly. "Respecting crime victim rights leads to better criminal justice outcomes and goes hand-in-hand with this administration's other innovative efforts to reduce crime throughout Maryland. I look forward to doing all I can to help in those efforts."

The addition of Kelly as chair of the MSBVS and the creation of the Victim Services Unit come at a time in which Maryland is expected to receive around \$36 million in Federal Victims of Crime Act funding (VOCA), an increase of \$28 million over what Maryland received in FY14. There will be an additional \$460,000 for a Victim Assistance Discretionary Grant Training Program. This unexpectedly large increase in VOCA funding gives Maryland the opportunity to make significant improvements in victim assistance services in an accountable and transparent manner.

GOCCP will continue to work to make sure that all funding sources for victims are coordinated. These include the Victims of Crime Act fund (VOCA), the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and the Maryland Victims of Crime Fund (MVOC), as well as other funding sources. This coordination would achieve maximum efficiency and provide Maryland's victims of crime with every available resource.

Over the coming months, GOCCP will be working closely with the Victim Services Unit to learn about the needs of communities throughout Maryland. This needs assessment will take place in neighborhoods in every region to determine how victim services grant funding can address unmet needs.

"Steven Kelly's leadership will guide us as we hold listening sessions in Maryland communities, and work to ensure that crime victims and their families receive a seamless delivery of services," said Christopher B. Shank, the Executive Director of GOCCP. "As a state, we have a moral obligation to help victims navigate the criminal justice system, receive services including health and ongoing mental health services, and do our best to provide them with compensation for their losses. We look forward to constructing a solid strategic plan to determine how we should prioritize funding to meet the needs of Maryland's crime victims."

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